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Chapter 66: With fear

-Mari, I'm sorry, if it weren't for me, you wouldn't be making this decision.

Ana reached out and tugged on Mariana's sleeve, looking at her. Her heart was filled with guilt. At first she wanted to help Mariana, but she ruined everything in the end. This made her feel more and more guilty and sad.

Hiding her various emotions, Mariana turned her head, gently caressed Ana's hand and sighed. Looking at her, she consoled him:

-It's not your fault, she's always wanted to get me in trouble, thinking about how to kick me off the set. Don't worry, I'm fine.

However, after saying these words, Mariana felt uneasy. If her father had been bribed by Andrea, then it was only a matter of time before she lost this job.

But these...

Mariana looked at Ana, whose eyes were full of tears, and said no more. It was better that she did not find out about these things.

Mariana lived the next few days in fear, but nothing happened. During this period of time, her father did not appear again, so she felt disconcerted but also relieved.

That day, Mariana came to the set, left the bag in her hand, and then went to work.

Suddenly the phone rang, Mariana was a little confused. Holding the scissors in one hand, the other hand went for the phone, but her eyes were still looking at the clothes on the table and thinking.

However, her hand was accidentally cut by the scissors. Blood slowly seeped out, causing pain to her. She hurriedly grabbed the handkerchief and pressed it over the wound.

Her cell phone was still ringing, Mariana impatiently picked up the phone,

-I am Mariana.

Her eyes kept looking at her wound, the blood soaking into the tablecloth.

-You are Mariana, yes? I'm Lina from Patio Feliz. I'm sorry to bother you. Zoraida is sick and there's no one to take care of her. I didn't have time either, so I found your phone number in her phone.

The person spoke in an embarrassed voice, obviously not wanting to upset Mariana, but he had no choice.

Mariana's body trembled and the handkerchief covering the wound fell to the floor, the wound was still bleeding. Mariana was a little worried when she heard Lina's words.

He was holding the phone between his head and shoulder, and was caught by his injured hand as the phone was about to fall to the ground. As the action was too big, the wound continued to bleed.

Mariana asked anxiously:

-Are you in the Happy Courtyard now? I'll be right back.

-Yes, then I'll wait for you here," Lina said in a cheerful voice.

After gathering her things, Mariana did not have time to ask permission from the director, she hurried to take a cab to the Patio Feliz. Her heart was beating violently, her lips were white and trembling, now she felt panic and worry.

He didn't want anything to happen to the old woman who had given him so much warmth in his childhood.

When she got out of the car, looked up and saw a rusty sign that read Happy Courtyard, Mariana felt a little sad, but also a little happy.

Remembering, Mariana quickly ran to Zoraida's house. She was about to knock on the door when it opened from the inside.

The person who opened the door was a woman in her forties. She had some wrinkles at the corners of her eyes, was cleanly and plainly dressed, and had a smile on her face.

It was Lina, Zoraida's neighbor who had just called her.

Mariana smiled and extended her hand in a very friendly way and asked:

-You're Lina, aren't you? I'm Mariana, is Zoraida inside now? Is she okay?

Lina happily extended her hand to shake Mariana's and nodded with a smile:

-The girl has become a woman.

He then went on to say sadly:

-During this period of time, Zoraida's state of health is unstable. She says she is fine and does not want to go to the doctor. Now she is seriously ill. As you know, Zoraida has no relatives and no money to go to the hospital, so she can only lie in bed.

-A few days ago, I realized that I had not seen her out for a walk for a long time. That is why, I came here, but I did not expect that her illness aggravated.

With a fierce tremor in her heart, Mariana entered Zoraida's house with Lina.

There was a thin old woman lying on the bed, her hair was white, some of it was even knotted, and it looked a bit dirty and disheveled. She was lying on the bed with her eyes closed, not realizing that someone had come in.

Seeing this scene, Mariana's heart trembled. Tears wet Mariana's eyes, then flowed out of her eyes and down her cheeks, slowly.

She approached Zoraida's bedside and reached out her trembling hand to gently caress her face. She felt bitter.

When she was a child, her parents beat her, she left home and walked alone. Eventually she came to this courtyard. This little girl looked at the word Happy and got angry. She picked up a rock, and threw it at the sign. As I vented my anger, a kind and gentle voice rang in my ears.

-Girl, why are you doing this? Do you know that this sign can feel pain too? If you treat it like this, it will cry at night.

The old woman gave a sigh, her tone was soft.

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Chapter 67: She's Tired

-Girl, you should know that it's not good to cry, you have to cry because you feel wronged, do you want others to suffer as much as you do when you feel wronged? That's not what a good girl should do.

Little Mariana threw the stone on the ground, turned around and saw a kindly old woman.

It was Zoraida.

Later, I always used to run here after being wronged.

Here, Zoraida comforted her and gave her candy; there were other neighbors who gave her food so she wouldn't go hungry; there were other people who gave her extra toys from their children; there were even people who brought her old clothes for her....

I had many memories of the Happy Courtyard.

The Happy Courtyard was the only light she had in those dark days and it still warmed her heart today. She was forever grateful for the people she met here.

Looking at Zoraida in front of her, Mariana cried a lot.

After taking a deep breath, Mariana's emotions calmed down. She stood up and turned around, wiped the tears from her face with her hand and looked at Lina with some embarrassment,

-Lina, if you have things to do at home, you can go, I'll take care of Zoraida here, don't worry.

Lina sighed, took out a handkerchief and wiped the tears from Mariana's face and said:

-You're a girl we've watched grow up, so of course I have no worries.

Looking at Mariana crying in front of her, Lina felt bitter and at the same time relieved.

-Since Zoraida has you to take care of her, I'm leaving, my husband who can't walk is still waiting for me at home.

Hearing this, Marina felt very sorry for Lina and said with a smile,

-I am here.

Although it was called Patio Feliz, life was not happy for everyone who lived here. But people helped each other, and their days were filled with laughter.

Standing in the same place, looking at Lina's back and her somewhat white hair in the wind, Mariana felt bitter. Turning around, she returned to Zoraida's side. She covered her with the blanket and watched her for a while, then went to the kitchen to boil water.

She took the towel and returned to Zoraida's bed. Mariana wet the towel and began to wipe Zoraida's cheeks and hands.

Finally, he helped her wash her hair.

After Mariana settled things, Zoraida woke up. When she saw Mariana, she was surprised.

Seeing this familiar appearance, it was like going back to the little girl who was throwing a stone.

-Mariana?

Zoraida's voice was hoarse and full of excitement. Hearing Zoraida's voice, Mariana cried again,

-Yes, Zoraida, it's Mariana, I'm back to see you.

Her voice was hoarse and her vision blurred, Mariana reached out and took the old hand that Zoraida raised shakily to touch her cheek.

In her memory Zoraida's hands had always been soft and strong, as if they had infinite energy. They held her through many hardships and gave her many happy ones. However, to her surprise, these hands had become so skinny.

-You are a good girl... -Zoraida said weakly.

-Stop talking, rest well, I'm going to get the doctor.

Mariana waited for Zoraida to fall asleep again, then went out to find a doctor.

After an examination, the doctor frowned and said:

-The old woman is tired and cannot maintain nutrition, after many years, her body is already very weak, now let her rest well.

"Has he become this way just because he has a weak body?"

The doctor prescribed some medication and left.

After glancing at Zoraida, who was unconscious on the bed, Mariana went to the side and called Ana.

-Anita, can you lend me some money? -Mariana found it difficult to say these words, but she had no choice.

She had given all her money to her father and had just spent the last of her savings on buying medicine, now she could only borrow money from Ana.

-Mari, have you encountered any problems? I still have money, I will transfer it to you right away.

After saying this, she hung up the phone. When she saw the information about the arrival of the money from the bank, Mariana was in a complicated mood.

In the following days, Mariana was taking care of Zoraida in the Patio Feliz. One day she returned to Leopoldo's villa and took some clothes with her. Under her care, although Zoraida was still very weak, her body slowly began to improve.

Mariana stood up and suddenly felt dizzy. She hurried to hold the chair next to her standing in the same place for a long time. She sat on the chair and rubbed her forehead with her hand, she felt pain all over her body and her temples were throbbing.

At that moment the phone rang, Mariana took a deep breath and saw that it was Ana's call.

-What is it? -asked Mariana.

-Mari, did you leave the set without talking to the director?

Mariana was shocked to realize that she had not said anything to the director when she left the set.

-Mari, you know that employees are not allowed to leave the set in private during working hours, and you didn't even give anything to the director. You will have to pay for the breach of contract," Ana said with concern.

However, Anita looked again at Zoraida who was sleeping weakly on the bed and said:

-Anita, I can't go back to the set right now.

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Chapter 68: Husband

There was a pause before she continued:

-I will find another way to pay for the breach of contract. Pay more attention to the work of the wardrobe team. I have something to do, I'm hanging up.

After saying this, he hung up the phone.

Mariana approached Zoraida's bed, looked at her and asked:

-Zoraida, are you hungry or thirsty? I'm going to pour you a glass of water.

Mariana poured a glass of water and carefully lifted Zoraida and gave her a drink.

-Zoraida, how are you? Are you all right?

He put the glass aside, Mariana sat next to him.

-Well, I feel fine," Zoraida's hoarse voice made Mariana's heart ache.

Suddenly, someone knocked on the door. Mariana was disconcerted and covered Zoraida with a blanket. Then she got up and opened the door.

Opening the door, however, she froze. "Why is he coming?"

The man in front of her was tall and stood in the doorway blocking the light, his shadow enveloping Mariana.

It was Leopoldo.

She still remembered the discomfort of the last time the two of them had caused. These days she was here to take care of Zoraida and, in fact, she was also avoiding Leopoldo.

Because I didn't want to see him yet and didn't know how to deal with him.

-Why did you come? -asked Mariana in a hoarse voice, while her heart was pounding.

Mariana looked at him and could not see the expression on his face because of the light. She lowered her head to hide the panic she felt.

-This place is small and not so clean, better not come in, if you come for the set....

However, before Mariana could finish, Leopoldo interrupted her:

-I come here not because of the set.

He then passed by her and entered the house.

Mariana froze for a moment, then followed him.

Leopoldo looked at the old woman lying on the bed and his expression changed slightly,

-Mariana, who is it?

Zoraida stood up with difficulty and looked at Mariana who was behind Leopoldo asking confused questions.

Hearing this, Mariana went to Zoraida's side and gently lifted her up and helped her lean against the wall.

However, Mariana did not know how to introduce Leopoldo.

Leopoldo looked at Zoraida and then looked at Mariana and said:

-I am Leopoldo Durán, Mariana's husband.

"Husband?"

Hearing these words, Mariana froze for a moment.

-Leopoldo, come closer and let me see you.

With that, he beckoned Leopoldo to come closer.

Mariana hid her excitement and grabbed Zoraida's hand.

-Zoraida...

However, the next moment, Leopoldo went to the bed and was next to Mariana.

-Zoraida.

Zoraida placed Leopoldo's hand over Mariana's hand.

Looking at the folded hands, Mariana was stunned. She had not expected such a cold person to have such warm hands.

-Since you are married, you must live together for the rest of your lives, your hands must never be separated.

Suddenly, Leopoldo squeezed Mariana's hand. She looked at him in surprise.

For a moment, Mariana also forgot to take her hand away from Leopoldo's.

-That's good.

Zoraida nodded in satisfaction, but her hand dropped weakly, as if she were very tired.

Mariana hastily removed her hand from Leopoldo's and gently lowered Zoraida onto the bed.

-Zoraida, rest, I am going to prepare meals.

The two left the room, Mariana closed the door. Then she went to the kitchen and Leopoldo followed her.

When she reached the kitchen door, Mariana frowned and felt annoyed. She wanted to say something to Leopoldo and turned around, but bumped into the man's hard chest and fell backwards.

Mariana shouted.

The next moment, a warm palm caught her, the warmth of the hand penetrated her skin, and gradually spread to all parts of her body, and her cheeks flushed.

At that moment, sunlight poured down on them.

Mariana looked at Leopoldo with her mouth open. There was an elegance in his gaze that she had never had before.

Leopoldo exerted some force to pull Mariana closer to him.

Feeling that strength, Mariana hurried to move away from Leopoldo. After standing up, she was a little nervous and dazed.

-Thank you.

However, Mariana's words made Leopoldo's heart flutter.

Mariana turned around, walked into the kitchen and started cooking. She was busy cooking, but she could still feel Leopoldo's burning gaze. Thinking about what had happened, Mariana felt more tense.

Mariana prepared two simple dishes. She went into the room and fed Zoraida. Then she came out and sat down next to the table. She did not dare to look at Leopoldo directly and said:

-Let's eat, there aren't many ingredients here, so suck it up.

By this time, the only sound left in the room was the sound of eating, making the atmosphere between them seem even stranger.

After finishing the meal in silence, Mariana took the dishes to the kitchen to clean them. When she came out, she did not expect to see Leopoldo in the courtyard, raising his head to look at the stars in the sky. His face was peaceful and different from the usual.

Mariana felt joyful. She untied her apron and approached the man, also raising her head to look at the sky.

-The stars tonight are beautiful.

It seemed like a long time since he had seen a sky full of stars.

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Chapter 69: A miserable childhood

Life in the city is very fast and no one has time to stop and look at the beautiful night sky.

-I only know that your parents are the only relatives you have now.

Hearing Leopoldo's words, Mariana froze for a moment. Mariana felt a little sad. But her expression was hidden by the darkness of night.

-Yes, I don't have a grandmother, but Zoraida is like my family.

The man looked at Mariana and said nothing.

-When I was little, I would always come to Zoraida's house and we would watch the night sky together. That feeling was really beautiful, we are like relatives.

Mariana smiled, the good memories made her happy. Her tears filled her eyes again, so she saw that the stars in the sky became many.

-You should know that my father is a gambler. He can sell everything for the game, even me, my mother.

Mariana's words were emotionless.

Leopold suddenly remembered his father, who had come to the set to look for trouble that day.

-Once upon a time, he wanted to sell me to pay me back because he owed a lot of money, but in the end my mother stopped him.

-However, that was not the end of it. My mother begged my father to let me go. That night I stayed, but my mother, knowing that she herself might have angered my father and would be abandoned by him, or perhaps out of fear, beat me severely.

Hearing her words, Leopoldo shuddered slightly and his expression changed. He was still looking directly at Mariana.

-Actually, I was confused, not knowing if my mother loved me or not. She could be smiling at me asking me what I want to eat today, and the next second she threw all the prepared food on the floor and forced me to squat down to eat.

Mariana smiled sadly.

-I ran out of my house crying the night she hit me and stopped here. Then I met Zoraida.

A person who had almost changed his miserable childhood.

-Then he brought me home, washed me, cooked me and let me sleep curled up in his arms.

At this, Mariana smiled happily.

-I used to run here when I felt sad. The people here were very kind to me, and you could say that this was my secret childhood paradise. My parents didn't know here because I used to go out of my house secretly. But I went out every day, if they cared about me, how could they not know?

-They just didn't care about me.

The woman smiled, but with a strong sense of helplessness that he didn't want her to have.

-I lived a short happy life here.

It was the only light of his miserable childhood, so he didn't want to let go of it, he tried to hold on with all his might, but in the end, it was gone.

The words echoed in the star-filled night sky and dissipated in the cold wind. However, the coldness entered the heart.

Leopoldo looked at the woman next to him and felt a special emotion.

-The stars in the sky tonight are really beautiful," Leopoldo spoke softly, his words without the usual coldness, he was comforting Mariana.

-Yes," Mariana answered unconsciously.

Instantly, Leopoldo took off his jacket and covered Mariana's body. The clothes gave off a familiar smell of tobacco that lingered in Mariana's nose, making her body shudder.

Mariana lowered her head and looked at Leopoldo's black suit, which still carried the body heat of the man beside her. His heart, which had been gradually growing colder, seemed to be infused with a warm current at that moment, and Mariana couldn't help but reach out and grab the suit on his body.

-The night does not last forever, at dawn, the sun will rise, no one can change that.

Leopoldo's voice rang in her ears, his words were soft.

-Yes, I've probably already touched the light.

Mariana smiled. It was as if the cold winter had passed and spring had arrived.

The next day.

Mariana got up early, helped Zoraida wash and then went to prepare breakfast.

Mariana was perplexed when she opened the door, the room where Leopoldo lived last night was empty and the bed was made and no longer had a temperature. She frowned slightly and felt a little sad.

After accompanying Zoraida to breakfast, Mariana took out the computer she had with her.

He also couldn't forget last night's scenes. He wanted to draw these scenes.

At that moment, footsteps sounded outside the door.

Mariana got up and went to the door. Just as she opened the door, she looked at Lina carrying fruit. Behind her, there was a short, fat woman with a smile on her face, carrying a plate.

The two approached Mariana and handed her what they had in their hands.

Lina took an initiative to speak:

-Mariana, I brought some fruits and washed them. Let Zoraida also eat some fruit to replenish her vitamins.

-Mariana, this is the dish I cooked by myself, try it, if you like it, I'll bring it to you next time.

Mariana looked at them, feeling a little perplexed, and asked:

-What is all this?

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Chapter 70: It's me you're drawing.

-Mariana, when you were a child, we gave you food and drink, but those things weren't worth anything, and we don't want you to pay us.

When Lina finished speaking, Cecilia added with a smile:

-Yes, Mariana, you don't have to be like that, you even asked Leopoldo to send us so many things, saying it's to thank us. There is no need to do that.

"Leopoldo?"

In an instant, Mariana understood what had happened.

It is true that I had not expected that, after hearing his words yesterday, Leopoldo would prepare so many things to thank the neighbors of Patio Feliz.

Mariana's discomfort disappeared and now she was moved.

Mariana smiled and said:

-These things are to thank you for the care you gave me in my childhood, accept it.

At these words, Cecilia and Lina looked at each other and sighed again.

-When you were a child, every time I came here, you had bruises on your body, but you didn't cry. You were just standing next to Zoraida holding her hand which provoked sympathy to us.

Hearing these words, the smile on Mariana's face gradually faded.

-It is already the past.

When the two noticed Mariana's sadness, they looked at her with sympathy. But in an instant they replaced it with a smile.

-But it's good now, you have a good husband by your side, you won't suffer any more in the future.

Mariana froze for a moment. The words made her get slightly lost in her thoughts.

At that moment, Mariana suddenly heard moans.

Mariana took the fruits and plate that were in Lina and Cecilia's hands and said:

-It is possible that Zoraida is awake, I can't keep chatting with you.

Hearing this, Lina and Cecilia became a little worried and asked Mariana to come in quickly.

-Zoraida is the most important thing, come in, and we will leave.

After saying goodbye to Lina and Cecilia, Mariana returned to Zoraida's bed.

Zoraida had already woken up and was looking at Mariana.

-Zoraida, how are you?

-Mariana, is there another person in the house?

The voice was hoarse, but it was much better than before.

-Yes, Lina and Cecilia brought some food. We chatted for a while and now they are gone.

She felt sadness, Zoraida's eyes were full of sympathy:

-Life is not easy for them either.

Yes, all the people in the Happy Yard were good, but everyone's life was not easy.

Leopoldo came in the night.

Mariana put the fruit and the plate on the table. She cooked some eggs that the neighbors had brought in the afternoon and prepared the soup for dinner.

Sitting at the table, Mariana secretly glanced at Leopoldo. Although he was under the dim light, her nobility could be appreciated.

-These are the ones the neighbors brought today, all to thank you.

After thinking for a long time, Mariana said to Leopoldo:

-Thank you.

After saying that, she shook her head smiling, she had thanked Leopold many times in this period of time.

Leopoldo was slowly chewing his food.

Seeing this scene, Mariana felt relieved. At first, she thought that Leopoldo would not eat these dishes, but she did not expect him not to mind at all, which made Mariana feel comforted.

-You don't have to worry about your job. The director is a reasonable person, just stay here and take care of Zoraida.

Hearing these words, Mariana's actions stopped and she answered yes. After a long while, she asked:

-Why are you helping me?

This question was on Mariana's mind and had puzzled her for a long time, but she could not find an answer. They were married by agreement, and were not a real marriage, so why did Leopoldo help her many times?

-There is no reason.

Mariana didn't believe it, and raised her head to look directly at the man next to her.

Leopoldo smiled sarcastically and deep eyes looked at Mariana,

-Do you think there is something in you that I covet?

These words pierced Mariana's soft heart like a needle, making her feel pain. She felt sad to hear these words.

In the next instant, she panicked and looked away. Her body trembled slightly.

It was she herself who caused that humiliation. "Of course, the president of the Duran Group can't covet anything in me."

The two finished their dinner in silence.

After washing the dishes, Mariana was a little tired and felt very uncomfortable.

But when he entered the room, he found Leopoldo sitting in front of his laptop, staring at the screen.

Mariana quickly stepped forward, closed the computer and hugged him. She panicked.

-It's me you're drawing," Leopoldo spoke confidently.

He stood up and put his hands in his pants pockets, looking at Mariana's white face.

With the computer in her hand, Mariana did not know what to answer.

In the photo, they were stargazing in the courtyard like the night before.

He did not close his computer out of negligence, he did not expect Leopoldo to see this photo.

-You should know that we are married only because of the agreement. I don't want to have any rumors with you to affect the Durán Group.

Indeed, the marriage between them has been kept secret because it was not going to last for long.

The cold words stabbed straight into Mariana's soft heart like a dagger, instantly turning her face white.

After saying that, Leopoldo left.

Seeing her back gradually disappear, Mariana felt sad.

"Don't you want any scandal with me?"

"And the one with Andrea is what you want, isn't it?"

Mariana's body only felt cold.